There is a large number of diverse spirits, and almost every village has several in its territory. Each one has its own habitat in some singular place or object which stimulates the imagination: enormous trees, oval hollows which form ponds of a sort (jémbo, pl. baémbo), steep slopes, extraordinary pieces of limonite, whirlpools in streams and rivers, etc.

The Nkundó pray to the bilíma in order to obtain children. For that purpose they make offerings of food and money. To test someone's feelings toward it, an elíma may come to him in the evening or at night in the guise of a known person and ask for some small present. Unhappy is he who shows himself to be stingy; he will be deprived of the object of his desire, or his child will be premature or born sickly or deformed.

In addition to taking a generally friendly attitude toward the spirit, another means of ensuring his intervention is open to a woman. She can procure some kaolin (gongo) at the spirit's habitat (a jémbo, preferably). In the evening she mixes it with some plants. She smears her abdomen with this mixture, known as inó. She continues the treatment throughout her pregnancy; it has the property of removing everything in her which is of such a nature that it might oppose the spirit (ékékola lokeko jwá bilíma ílɔlɛ ndá likundú).

Certain water spirits are known for their generosity, for instance Itúmbálombé or Ekócalombé of Mpakú, [471] who is considered to be a female being. She goes on distant voyages to seek a supply of children. On her return she appears to someone and communicates the news to him so that he may spread it. But she orders all women who desire her favors to observe some form of abstinence. Sometimes she sings to amuse or calm the children. On that day mothers must not use songs to pacify their little ones or to put them to sleep and can use only soft words for that purpose. Otherwise the child would die, for to do so would be to disregard the old elíma's kindness.

Sometimes the spirits give signs of their blessing. A woman who is bathing on the shore just at the time a cargo arrives there will soon see her most intimate wish fulfilled. From forest spirits

7:Brown M-5 (ca. 1940) 1944 FO32 Mongo FO32
Ntomba

grasping the knife with his left hand, with his free right hand he drains a gourd of palm wine to gain courage, hits the nearest victim on the head with the empty gourd, then transfers the knife to his right hand. He is now ready for his work which he proceeds to do methodically, sustained by the heady wine and the rhythm of the drum. When he had finished one of the lines, a pause would be made to bring out the body for burial. Just before this is done an armed band rushes down the path, returns, goes up in the other direction, then returns; this is said by some to ward off any spirits which might be about. The *nkumu* is now brought out by the Batwa slaves.[1] His grave, a circular hole with a crypt in one side of it, its entrance facing west, had been previously prepared. Few people in the Bonginda villages knew or had seen the actual burying place of an *nkumu*. While the corpse was carried to the grave followed by a crowd, the executioner finished his work. Those who stayed behind took the bodies of the decapitated men and women and divided them among all the participants of the funeral who would subsequently devour everything.

Accompanying the funeral procession to the grave were the *nkili*, one or more men or women who were destined to accompany the *nkumu* to his grave and to the other world beyond. At the burial of an *nkumu* witnessed in 1930 at which the semblances of some of the old rites were carried out, a party of armed men contested the right of the procession to approach the grave, there was a mock battle for a few minutes between two bands of the funeral party, and then the procession gained right of way. At the grave-side the legs and sometimes the arms of one *nkili* were broken by heavy clubs to prevent him from escaping. Then seated on the ground the body of the *nkumu* would be placed on the knees of this one, whose arms would be placed round the *nkumu* and securely fastened by driving a peg right through both wrists. Sometimes two *nkili* were thus used. If the number of victims was sufficient, others would be buried alive too, being placed in the grave in the recumbent *mumpe* position, with the corpse on top of them, its weight being sufficient, with the earth filling in the grave, to prevent escape. The *nkumu* was now ready for burial and was placed in the crypt, facing west.[2] The relatives of the *nkumu* approach, they pluck the leaves and stem of a juicy bush known as *nsukalo* and chewing it, expectorate ceremonially on the body while they address it in language somewhat as follows: 'You are going to leave us now, we are mourning, for you were a good and wise man, your discernment in matters of justice was without parallel, &c. . . . we wish that you may be happy where you go, have many wives, beget many children, lack not for meat. But don't take with you our power to beget children, leave us also some of this wisdom of yours, for what you were, we would be.' This prayer over, the *nsunsulo* would be slipped off the head of the corpse and replaced by the informal hat, all done so dexterously that the bare head was not seen. The entrance to the

[1] The body was supposed to have remained in state for seven to nine days, but actually it was buried privately soon after death, a dummy being set up with the *nsunsulo* on its head, and the succeeding ceremonies being conducted with only the dummy in the place of the actual body. The inland villages however did allow the body to remain unburied for the long period, the wives being forced to keep watch in the same house. The Bonginda buried their *nkumu* generally in their houses at the spot where they had been accustomed to rest, burying the dummy at some other spot further off.

[2] All burials have particular regard to this east-west position, those buried in the recumbent position having the feet to the west. The native explanation is that this allows the spirit of the departed to follow the path of the sinking sun.